



Senate Natural Resources Committee, Senators:

Gebhardt, Kelly (Ch)
Barrett, Debby (V Ch)
Curtiss, Aubyn
Hansen, Ken
Kaufmann, Christine
Keane, Jim
Perry, Gary
Peterson, Jim
Steinbeisser, Donald
Tropila, Mitch
Wanzenried, David
cc: Sonja Nowakowski, Staff

SENATE NATURAL RESOURCES
EXHIBIT NO. 11
DATE Jan. 28, 2009
BILL NO. SB 200

January 27, 2009

Re: *SB 200*

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on SB 200: An Act Banning the Sale of Phosphorus-Containing Household Cleaning Products. The Clark Fork Coalition supports this bill, and hopes the committee will pass it to protect Montana's streams, rivers, and water quality.

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring element, and an important nutrient for a healthy ecosystem. However, **too much phosphorus in our rivers and streams results in heavy algal blooms that degrade habitat and harm water quality.**

Two decades ago, counties in the Clark Fork River watershed banned the sale of phosphate-containing laundry detergents, resulting in measurable improvements to the river's water quality. Now its time to support legislation that takes the next step to protect our water: banning phosphates in dishwasher detergents.

- Household cleaning products are one of the main unnatural contributors of phosphorus to our waters. Dishwashing detergents, in particular, contain anywhere from 4 to 8% phosphorus.
- This phosphorus permeates into our ground and surface waters through wastewater discharge, such as sewer treatment plants, septic systems, and storm drains.
- A recent study showed that at least 15% of the total phosphorus entering the wastewater treatment plant in Lolo, MT originated from dishwashing detergents.

- Another study in Massachusetts estimated that 8-34% of the phosphorus in municipal wastewater may originate from automatic dishwashers.
- Several phosphate-free detergent brands are already available, including Seventh Generation, Trader Joe's and Ecover. The Soap and Detergent Association has agreed to produce more varieties by July 1, 2010, which is the date the proposed legislation would take effect in Montana.
- This bill would apply to counties where water bodies exceed the state's water quality standards for phosphorus and/or algal biomass—currently, only the Clark Fork River meets that criteria.
- The ban would only apply to household detergents, and provides exemptions for cleaning products used for commercial, agricultural or industrial purposes.
- Montana would join several states that have already passed bans on phosphate-containing cleaning products, including our neighbor, Washington, which adopted a phosphate ban to protect the Spokane River.

The Clark Fork Coalition, an organization comprised of 1,500 members, works to protect and restore the Clark Fork River watershed, a 22,000-square-mile basin in western Montana. Thank you for your time, and for considering passing this bill to protect Montana's waters.

Sincerely,

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